

for what you have had to endure by palinopsia

Series: a sinner once, a sinner twice [2]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Character Study, Child Abuse, Gen, Internalized Homophobia, M/M, Past Child Abuse, Pre-Relationship

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Neil Hargrove, Steve Harrington

Relationships: slight Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-11-27

Updated: 2017-11-27

Packaged: 2022-04-03 05:01:23

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Graphic Depictions Of Violence

Chapters: 1

Words: 3,998

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

There are things that have stayed with Billy, throughout the years. Moments he can't forget, memories that haunt him. And most of the time, they make him really, really fucking angry. So he doesn't think about them.

But sometimes, they make him feel vulnerable.

And sometimes, it just hurts.

for what you have had to endure

Author's Note:

i know it's in the tags but seriously, do not read this fic if you have issues with reading about child abuse, or abuse in general (including physical, verbal and emotional abuse)

picks up from where pestilence left off. i strongly recommend reading it before this one, but it's not required by any means. title is again taken from the four horsemen by metallica

also harringrove is not the main focus of this fic, but it's still in there so i guess don't read it if it's not your thing. it's more just billy & steve at this point though instead of billy/steve so eh

Billy wakes up to the sound of his Camaro. He'd recognize it anywhere, even while unconscious.

He doesn't quite understand, thoughts still hazy from having just woken up (*from sedative induced sleep*, his mind supplies.) It's only when he realizes his keys are missing from his pocket that he really awakens, and there's a split second of panic before he hears the car stop.

He fully expects his sister and her stupid little friends to walk in any second – it's not the first time she's stolen his car. He expects she'll make up some shitty excuse. And he expects, *hopes*, for her sake, that there isn't as much as a single scratch.

What he doesn't expect is Steve Harrington, seemingly alone, standing there like Billy didn't just beat the shit out of him a few hours ago.

He quickly stands up, all his drowsiness suddenly gone.

Billy knows he should admire his handiwork. Feel proud, enjoy the

sight of his victory, face messed up, bloodied all over. But he doesn't. He doesn't feel good at all.

"You up? Good," Steve says. "You can get the hell out." He points to the door.

Billy takes a deep breath. He doesn't want a repeat performance. He really doesn't.

That, and he can't take Steve seriously with a goddamn rainbow band aid on his face.

"Did you just steal my fucking car, Harrington?" His voice is more uneven than he expects. He takes a step towards Steve, who looks away, shaking his head. "Answer me."

Steve stares at him for some time.

"Listen, dipshit," he starts. "You would not believe the night I just had. No, really, you wouldn't, even if I told you—"

"The hell is that supposed to mean?"

"It means," Steve sighs, and throws the keys at Billy. He catches them mid-air. "That I am in no mood for another fight. I brought you your car, so... you can just leave."

And something's off about Steve, Billy notices. The liveliness is gone from his voice, replaced by a kind of exhaustion that's more than just physical. The kind that you can't sleep off. The kind that stays.

And Billy believes him. Believes it's about more than just their fight earlier. Believes that whatever he's been through tonight, whatever he's seen, has taken a toll on him. And for some reason, that bothers him.

But Billy can still feel his anger building, rising. Because there are more important things to worry about right now.

"I'm not going anywhere without Max." He takes another few steps.

And Steve just looks at him, with a hint of confusion, like he's trying

to solve a puzzle. “Well, you’ll just have to.” He shrugs. He fucking *shrugs*.

“What the fuck, Harrington?” he almost laughs. This is fucking absurd. “Where’s my sister?” he asks, arms outstretched. Another few steps, and Steve’s face looks so much worse up close.

“I can’t tell you. But believe me when I say she’s safe, away from *you*”

“Are you fucking kidding me? *Where* is my sister, Harrington?” Steve doesn’t answer, averting his gaze again. Billy’s running out of patience. “*Where is she?*” he roars.

“I don’t want a fight, Billy.”

“As if you could beat me,” Billy scoffs.

“As if you care about Max.”

And for a moment, Billy freezes, caught completely off-guard. Then he feels the rage, and it burns. It burns in his veins, runs through his entire body.

“Just tell me where she is!” he snaps, grabbing Steve by the collar of his shirt. He locks eyes with Steve, unblinking. And he waits. Waits for him to avert his gaze. Waits for him to push him away. Waits for him to fucking *do something*.

But he doesn’t. He holds Billy’s gaze. And Billy doesn’t know what to do with that. And the flare of anger dies as quickly as it came.

“Go home, Billy,” Steve says quietly. Any heat is gone from his voice. Steve doesn’t seem to have an ounce of anger left in him. And that bothers Billy, too.

Then it’s Billy’s turn to fall silent. Because there is simply nothing he can say to that. He quickly looks away, but Steve must’ve seen something in his expression, because his face softens suddenly. And Billy realizes he’s never seen that look before. He looks... kind, but in a way that doesn’t feel like pity. It suits him. It’s such a... *Steve* look.

Billy doesn't deserve it. Billy doesn't deserve anything resembling kindness after what he did to Steve. He doesn't *want* kindness. He wants chaos. He wants fire. He wants blood.

But there he is, with that stupid look on his face, making Billy feel like... he doesn't know how it makes him feel. It's new. Billy doesn't like it.

Steve exhales deeply before speaking.

"Look, I'm sorry, but I really can't tell you. I swear she's safe, and she'll be home by tomorrow."

And it sinks in, all at once, that Steve is serious. He's really not going to tell him. And there's nothing Billy can do to change that.

There is no way he's going to find Max tonight.

"That's not helpful," he mutters as he lets go of Steve, turning to leave.

"Your parents put you up to this?" Steve asks suddenly, grabbing Billy by the arm, preventing him from leaving. Billy turns around immediately, something shifting in his stomach.

"What?" He hates how panicked he sounds. Of course Steve doesn't know. He couldn't.

"Nothing, I just..." Steve trails off, seemingly realizing that was the wrong thing to ask. "...find it hard to believe you're looking for her because you're worried." He gives Billy a skeptical look.

Billy holds his gaze, searching, studying. But there's nothing. Steve has no idea what he's talking about.

"None of your fuckin' business, asshole. Get out of my face." He pushes Steve's hand away, and when he's finally at the door, he can't help himself.

"The fuck kinda place is this, anyway?" He asks as he turns around, and makes a vague gesture at the walls, frowning. "A crazy person live here or somethin'?"

"It's, uh," Steve stammers. "It's for a project."

Billy just stares at him.

"Look, never mind. Just tell your parents that Max is safe, alright? She's okay. I swear."

"Whatever."

Billy slams the door as he leaves.

Billy knows what's waiting for him when he gets home.

It's still dark when he arrives, and he lingers at the door for some time, just breathing. In, and out, and he can see his breath, disappearing into the night air like smoke. It's the only sign it's cold outside. Billy feels like he's burning up, insides on fire, twisting and churning. He doesn't have to look down to know his hands are trembling.

Billy's not scared. Billy Hargrove is never scared.

It's a lie he's mastered. It's a lie he tells the whole world. It's a lie he tells himself.

It's a lie.

He knows his father heard the car – he must have. He's awake, Billy's sure of it. Waiting. Smoking. Drinking, probably.

And Billy knows what's waiting for him. But he opens the door anyway, because Billy has never backed down from a fight, and he isn't about to start now.

Except it's not a fight, a voice in his head tells him. *You're not fighting. You're scared. Like a little bitch.*

When he steps inside, the house is completely silent except for the low hum of the TV. It's unsettling. It screams domesticity. Like Billy might find his dad asleep on the couch. Like he doesn't have to be afraid. Like what's about to happen might not happen.

But it's a lie.

And when Billy finally enters his room, he isn't surprised to find his father staring at him, arms crossed.

It's a while before he says anything. Eventually he stands up, takes a few steps, and when he finally breaks the silence, it's too loud, too soon—

“Well?” He *has* been drinking.

Billy doesn't make eye contact. He doesn't speak. He just stands there, looking like a man sentenced to death. He breathes. In. Out.

His father takes a step closer, into his personal space.

“ Well? ” Louder.

Billy finally meets his gaze, and swallows, throat suddenly dry. “Listen, dad, I looked for her *everywhere*, alright, and she—”

He's interrupted by his father slamming him into the door before he can finish his sentence.

“Where's Max, Billy?” He sounds calm, but Billy knows that tone. He braces himself.

“She's okay, dad, she—” And despite everything, the slap still comes as a surprise. It always does. And it always stings. Billy can take punches and kicks, but the slaps... their sting lingers. He can feel that shit days later. Not on his skin, though. No, deeper than that. Much, much deeper. It's humiliating.

“Where *is* she, Billy?”

He doesn't speak. He can't.

“Where the hell is she?” he shouts, shoving him against the door again. And as the back of Billy’s head hits the door, he idly wonders if Susan’s awake. She’s gotta be, after *that*. Billy will have to be quiet. Don’t want her seeing this shit. His father will just take it out on him.

“I don’t know,” he manages to croak, eventually.

His father stares at Billy for what feels like an eternity. It feels like his eyes are piercing into his soul, clawing their way in. He can see his jaw clenching, the muscles in his shoulders tensing. Billy knows he’s running out of patience – if he even had any to begin with.

“You don’t know,” he repeats, nodding and looking away. Slow, careful. Billy wishes he would just get on with it. This is the worst part, the tension, the threat, the *humiliation*. He knows his father doesn’t care about Max, that it’s just an excuse. There’s always an excuse. And it’s always Billy’s fault.

And Billy doesn’t speak. Billy doesn’t speak, because there is nothing to say. Because nothing Billy *can* say in this moment will change the outcome. He feels small.

“You worthless piece of shit,” his father says, utter contempt dripping from his voice.

Billy had expected a belting, as per usual. Maybe more bruises than usual. He should’ve known – his father isn’t stupid. It’s painfully clear that Billy’s been in a fight. It’s the perfect cover.

Another wave of dread washes over Billy at the realization. His father has no reason to hold back.

Maybe this is it, he thinks. *Maybe this is the time he’ll finally kill me. Won’t be able to stop hitting.* And it’s such a familiar feeling, that fear. It’s paralyzing.

And this time, he doesn’t have time to brace himself as his father punches him square in the jaw. The world goes black for a second.

“You knew what would happen.”

Again, this time in the nose. Then everything is too bright.

“And you disobeyed me. Twice.”

And again, and this time he just knows it was somewhere on his face. It's too numb to tell where, exactly, just that it hurts. He can taste what is unmistakably blood, warm and metallic.

“You brought this on yourself.”

And he keeps hitting.

And when he can't feel his face anymore, the stench of alcohol is overwhelming as his father grabs Billy by the throat. He doesn't resist as he throws him to ground. Resisting just makes it worse. It's a lesson Billy's learned well.

There are many lessons Billy's learned, things that have stayed with Billy throughout the years. Moments he can't forget, memories that haunt him.

He tries not to think about them, but he knows it doesn't work that way. They're rooted deep within him, behind his every move, every emotion (not that he has a wide range.) They're with him constantly, and it hurts. It hurts all the time, and it makes Billy really, really fucking angry.

So he tries not to think about them.

But he can't help it, can't help feeling like a child again, defenseless and weak, as his father's boot digs into his side, kicking with relentless force, over and over again. Billy curls up into a ball in a futile attempt to protect his stomach. He knows it won't work. Never has. He does it anyway.

The next kick is aimed at his back, and it catches Billy off-guard and he rolls over, arching his back. Billy's pretty good at blocking out the pain, but he really feels that one – probably his kidney. Then a kick aimed just below his sternum knocks the wind out of him, and as he gasps for air, he can't help it. He remembers. Remembers when he was ten, his father coming home for the first time in two days. He'd reeked of alcohol and piss, as he often did when he came home so late.

It's funny – he doesn't remember what happened, what it was that caused it, he never does; only the reaction. He must have said something to piss him off, confronted him about coming home late or something, because the next thing he remembers, his father had a belt in hand, and... He distinctly remembers thinking, the entire time, that he'd deserved it.

He couldn't walk for almost an entire day, after that.

His father fucking loved that belt. He was proud of it, too, Billy could tell. Often times he'd just take it off, slap it on a table. It would scare the shit out of Billy, just the sound, the *threat* of it–

The smart thing to do was to just stay really fucking quiet and out of sight. Really, all he had to do was shut up. But he never did learn to be quiet. Never knew when to shut up. And he paid for it.

And it fills him with rage as he takes the beating, lying there on his side, until he's shaking from it. He feels helpless, powerless to do anything, and he wants to scream. All he can manage is a groan, though, and his breaths are jagged, rough and becoming increasingly harder to control. Another particularly hard kick to his stomach sends him into a coughing fit, and he wheezes as he gasps for air. He knows it's the blood. He feels numb all over.

It takes him a moment to realize his father has stopped kicking.

"Next time you disobey me like this, I won't be so kind." Billy can barely make out what he said, senses overwhelmed by the taste of blood, smell of booze, the sound of ringing in his ears. And dull, numbing pain.

Billy opens his mouth to speak, but no sound comes out. He's not sure what he was going to say. Apologize? Beg?

As he struggles to breathe, his father gives him one final kick to his face, and his vision blacks out for a moment.

When he's aware of his surroundings again, he can hear footsteps, followed by the sound of a door opening, and being shut. It all sounds muffled, distant.

Billy just lies there.

It's a while before he can get back on his feet.

Every inch of his body hurts.

The cold water is refreshing, though, and Billy is grateful for the numbness it brings. His shaking has reduced to a weak trembling, now. Billy knows it's not because of the cold, but he can pretend. He has to. He doesn't want to think about it. And as he watches the blood join the stream and flow down the drain, he can feel his anger fading away.

What it leaves behind is much worse, though. He doesn't want to think about that, either.

He steps out of the shower, wrapping a towel around his waist. It hurts to move. He'll have to skip basketball practice.

He looks himself over in the mirror, assessing the damage. It's all red and purple, but it's not too bad. It'll hurt like hell and he'll be sore for a couple weeks, but nothing too serious. He presses his fingers against his ribs, applying pressure over the area. Nothing seems to be broken, or cracked, as far as he can tell. He won't have to go to a hospital, at least.

It takes him a few minutes to finally look at his face, though, and he winces when he does. He won't need stitches, but it's bad. He looks worse than Steve – Steve, with his stupid rainbow band aids and busted lip – and the realization hits hard and fast, like a punch to the gut.

Everyone's gonna think he kicked my ass.

And before he can get angry, a second, far worse realization hits him, this time like a ton of bricks.

Except Steve.

His stomach drops, and he tries not to panic, but it's becoming increasingly difficult the more he thinks about it. Because Billy knows that Steve knows, and Steve knows that Billy knows that Steve knows that Billy knows, that Steve didn't do this, and Billy feels like he's going crazy. If Steve puts two and two together...

Your parents put you up to this?

Billy doesn't know what to do. He could tell anyone. If anyone so much as suspects... Billy can't let that happen. And that means he'll have to trust him. He'll have to trust Steve. Steve, who has absolutely no reason to help Billy.

And there's nothing Billy can do about it. He's powerless.

It scares the shit out of him.

Steve can't breathe a word of this to anyone. No one can suspect anything. He'll have to swallow his pride, let everyone think Steve thrashed him. It's a small price to pay compared to what his father will do to him if he hears – hears that Billy couldn't keep his mouth shut, keep a secret, chose his dignity over–

And this time, the realization sinks in slowly, painfully. This was what his father wanted. He knew exactly the situation he'd be putting Billy in, and he planned it all along, wanted him to–

He underestimated his father. He should've known better. It's his fault for thinking he wouldn't. For not expecting it. The fact that he can still be so naïve, so stupid, after years –

He feels sick.

And he can't help it as he wraps a wet towel around a bag of ice, bringing it to his face with trembling hands. He can't help it as the cold burns, and numbs, and soothes. He remembers.

Remembers when he was eight, in the car with his father. They were on some highway, on their way home. He'd been crying about... something, earlier. It was probably something stupid, the kind of stuff

kids that age cry about. It doesn't matter what it was. His father was pissed about it.

He remembers, as he presses the ice against his cheek, that it was really hot in the car, because it always was, in Cali. But that day, it was worse than usual, and he kept leaning out of the window. He knows he shouldn't have insisted on doing it, despite his father's warnings. Warnings that it was dangerous, that he should keep his arms inside the car. Despite his threats. Something about... disobeying, and how he needed to be disciplined.

Billy just didn't think he'd actually do it. He truly believed his father wouldn't leave him.

Even when his father stopped the car, he didn't think he'd go through with it.

Even when he threw him out of the car, he hoped he wouldn't leave.

And when he left, he waited.

It was dark when he finally got home. His legs hurt. His father didn't even look at him.

He doesn't know if his father would've come back for him. He doesn't know if his father knew that Billy knew the way home. He doesn't know if he left him close to the house on purpose.

He doesn't know, and it still hurts.

And he feels exactly the same way as he did then, as he applies the ice to the bruises on his ribs. He remembers it, remembers feeling humiliated, except it was his fault for not anticipating it. Remembers feeling deceived, except it was his fault for being too naïve.

Remembers feeling betrayed, except it was his fault for trusting him.

The feeling of vulnerability settles deep inside his stomach, like a bleeding wound, and it's an ugly thing. It's an ugly, terrible feeling.

The house is completely silent by the time he goes to bed, save for the occasional whizzing of cars passing by.

Billy knows he won't get any sleep. He never does, after... it doesn't matter. He has to be up in a few hours. He'd skip school, but... he's not going to risk his father finding out. He doesn't have a death wish.

So he just lies there, fully awake.

And that's when it comes, the worst part. It comes in the dead of night when he's completely alone, lying in bed. Everything he wishes he didn't remember, everything he tries to keep from actually *feeling*, pours out of him in silent sobs, shoulders shaking and breath hitching.

And Billy hates himself for it. Hates how weak he is. Hates how powerless he is. Hates that feeling deep in his chest, in his stomach, spreading and threatening to consume, swallow him whole. He knows what it is. He's known for far too long.

And he remembers. Because that's all he can do. Because he can't help it. Because he has no control. And it's killing him.

I hear you were crying at school today. Is that true?

He closes his eyes, trying to shut away the memory, but the tears burn, they *burn* and it *hurts*. And the feeling of helplessness hurts more than anything, as real as ever, and Billy just wants it to stop, wants *him* to just stop, to fucking *stop* –

That you got your ass kicked because you were too scared to fight? Like a pussy?

He must've been around twelve, he remembers it so clearly. Not the fight, but his dad. The look of disgust on his face.

And it's overwhelming, the sense that there's something wrong with him. Something fundamentally flawed within him, something awful. He feels sick. He feels sick to his stomach. And it hurts.

Like a fucking faggot?

Billy hates that word. Hated it since the first time he heard it. He's told himself it doesn't mean anything, countless times, told himself that he's okay, that there's nothing wrong with him for being who he is.

And for a moment he's reminded of Cali, and his friends, and how *right* he'd felt when he was with them. But he can still feel the sting where his father had hit him that day, and they're not in Cali, anymore.

No, they're in ass-end-of-nowhere, Indiana, now. And Billy has lost everything.

Are you, Billy? Are you a little bitch? A pansy? Are you too weak to fight?

He'd screamed, cried that he wasn't, sworn it.

But his father loved that belt.

You better not be, you piece of shit.

But he is. He is all of those things.

And as he lies there, shaking violently, feeling like he's being torn apart, he knows what it is, that feeling. He can feel it in his gut, feel it crawling under his skin, stuck in his throat, choking him. It's everywhere, it's everything he knows, and he can't stand it.

It's shame.

And he desperately wishes he could stop the tears, telling himself to *fucking stop, stop it, stop crying like a little bitch*, because he's not supposed to cry, and he's not supposed be weak, and it's not supposed to *hurt* like this. He isn't supposed to feel this much pain. He doesn't know how to *deal* with so much *pain*.

He doesn't realize he'd been holding his necklace until he feels a sharp pain in his hand, the medallion digging into his palm.

He doesn't remember falling asleep.

Author's Note:

any feedback or constructive criticism is always welcome